

Message Text

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ACTION EA-13

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 4475

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 11739

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR JA KS

SUBJ: DETERIORATION OF ROK-JAPAN RELATIONS

REF: STATE 197975

SUMMARY: VICE MINISTER TOGO CALLED AMBASSADOR HODGSON IN TO REPORT STATUS OF ROK-JAPAN NEGOTIATIONS. HE OUTLINED OFFER MADE EARLIER SEPT 10 TO ROK SIDE TO SEND SPECIAL EMISSARY BEARING LETTER ADDRESSED TO PRES PAK EXPRESSING REGRETS FOR INCIDENT, INTENT TO COOPERATE WITH ROKG AUTHORITIES IN INVESTIGATIONS IN JAPAN, AND DETERMINATION TO DO BEST TO PREVENT ACTIVITIES IN JAPAN PREJUDICIAL TO ROK-JAPAN RELATIONS. GOJ COULD NOT ASSUME FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR INCIDENT OR NAME CHOSOREN IN TEXT OF LETTER. ROKG RESPONSE INSISTS ON SATISFACTION RE ASSUMPTION OF RESPONSIBILITY AND MENTION OF CHOSOREN IN LETTER. GOJ WILL NOW HAVE TO STUDY ROK RESPONSE, BUT TOGO FEELS JAPANESE SIDE HAS NEARLY EXHAUSTED STEPS IT CAN TAKE. END SUMMARY.

1. VICE FOREIGN MINISTER TOGO CALLED AMBASSADOR TO OKURA HOTEL LATE TODAY TO REPORT PRIVATELY ON STATUS OF ROK-JAPAN NEGOTIATIONS. FOCUS OF BOTH SIDES NOW ON CONFIDENTIAL

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QUESTION OF LETTER FROM PRIME MINISTER TANAKA, INCLUDING

ROK DEMANDS THAT IT BE ADDRESSED TO PRES PAK, BE CARRIED BY SPECIAL ENVOY OF SUITABLE RANK, AND CONTAIN RECOGNITION OF JAPANESE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT AND SPECIFIC PROMISE TO CONTROL CHOSOREN.

2. TOGO SAID FONMIN KIMURA MET WITH ROK AMB KIM MORNING SEPT 10 AND TOLD HIM THAT, SUBJECT TO APPROVAL OF TANAKA, AND REASONABLE ASSURANCE THAT LETTER WOULD BE ACCEPTED AND WOULD MEET ROK DEMANDS, GOJ PREPARED TO SEND SPECIAL ENVOY TO SEOUL OF SUFFICIENT RANK TO SATISFY QTE KOREAN MOOD UNQTE. KIMURA ALSO INDICATED TO KIM THAT, WITH ENVOY OF SUCH RANK, GOJ WOULD CONSIDER IT POSSIBLE TO ADDRESS LETTER TO PRES PAK RATHER THAN TO PM KIM CH'ONG-P'IL. AMB KIM WAS TOLD THAT CONTENTS OF LETTER WOULD EXPRESS SINCERE REGRETS FOR INCIDENT QTE IN LIGHT OF FACTS INVOLVED UNQTE, BUT THAT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR GOJ TO ACCEPT FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR INCIDENT IN TEXT OF LETTER. KIMURA TOLD KIM THAT LETTER WOULD CONTAIN EXPRESSION OF INTENT TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE IN COOPERATION WITH ROK POLICE TO INVESTIGATE ALL ASPECTS OF INCIDENT THAT OCCURRED IN JAPAN. LETTER ALSO WOULD SAY THAT GOJ WILL DO ITS BEST TO PREVENT AND EXERCISE CONTROL OVER TERRORISTIC ACTS PREJUDICING ROK-JAPAN RELATIONS WITHIN JAPAN. KIMURA EXPLAINED TO KIM THAT GOJ COULD NOT IN TEXT OF LETTER MENTION NORTH KOREA OR CHOSOREN BY NAME FOR DOMESTIC POLITICAL REASONS.

3. TOGO SAID THAT IF THESE MEASURES ARE ACCEPTABLE TO ROKG THEY COULD MOVE TO RESOLUTION OF CURRENT CRISIS. HE SAID KIMURA IS CONCERNED THAT WHEN ENVOY MEETS PRES PAK HE WILL BE CONFRONTED WITH EMOTIONAL TIRADE THAT WILL MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO HOLD PROGRESS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THIS SCENARIO. ENVOY WOULD BE INSTRUCTED, HOWEVER, TO GO OVER CONTENTS OF LETTER ORALLY WITH PAK, EXPLAINING PROBLEM OF NORTH KOREA AND CHOSOREN CONNECTIONS AND GENERALLY SUPPLEMENTING WRITTEN TEXT. TOGO SAID THEY WERE THEN AWAITING ROKG REACTION, EXPECTED MOMENTARILY. TOGO SAID HAD SOUGHT MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR HODGSON TO INFORM HIM OF STATUS OF PROBLEM. GOJ DID NOT WISH TO REQUEST US TO TAKE SPECIFIC ACTION AT THIS TIME, BUT ROK SIDE MIGHT APPROACH US FOR VIEW

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OF GOJ POSITION. TOGO EMPHASIZED THAT OFFERS MADE EARLIER TODAY CONSTITUTE VIRTUALLY FINAL EXTENT TO WHICH GOJ CAN GO. HE STRONGLY HOPED SPECIAL ENVOY, WHICH HAD SEEMED POINT OF FIRST IMPORTANCE WHEN TOGO MET EVENING SEPT 9 WITH AMB KIM, WOULD SUFFICE AND ROKG WOULD NOT INSIST FURTHER ABOUT PHRASING OF TEXT OF LETTER.

4. TOGO CONFESSED TO SOME PESSIMISM REGARDING LIKELY

ROKG RESPONSE TO LATEST GOJ OFFER, PRIMARILY BECAUSE HE DETECTED KOREAN IMPULSE (PARTICULARLY FONMIN KIM) TO INSIST ON COMPLETE JAPANESE ASSUMPTION OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR INCIDENT, SOMETHING GOJ FEELS IS NEITHER RIGHT NOR POLITICALLY FEASIBLE. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT JAPANESE ERRORS HAD EXACERBATED TENSIONS (FONOFF-SOURCED PRESS REPORTS, KIMURA STATEMENT) AND EXPRESSED COMPLETE SYMPATHY WITH ROKG RE DIFFICULTIES CAUSED BY ACTIVITIES OF NORTH KOREA AND CHOSOREN.

5. CONVERSATION WAS INTERRUPTED BY TELEPHONE CALL FROM FONOFF INFORMING TOGO OF ROKG RESPONSE TO LATEST OFFER. HE TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT FONMIN KIM HAD TOLD AMB USHIROKU IN SEOUL THAT ROKG STILL INSISTED TEXT OF LETTER BE ALTERED TO SATISY ROK DEMANDS ON QUESTION OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR INCIDENT AND SPECIFIC NAMING OF CHOSOREN IN CONNECTION WITH QTE TERRORISTIC UNQTE ACTIVITIES IN JAPAN. TOGO SAID THEY WOULD HAVE TO STUDY ROKG RESPONSE, BUT HE ASSUMED KOREANS WOULD NOT ACCEPT SPECIAL ENVOY UNLESS WORDING OF THESE TWO POINTS COULD BE AGREED BEFOREHAND. LACKING SUCH AGREEMENT, LETTER WOULD HAVE TO BE TRANSMITTED THROUGH USHIROKU. IF, AS SEEMED LIKELY, THAT WOULD WORSEN SITUATION, LETTER MIGHT HAVE NO POINT.

6. IN RESPONSE TO AMBASSADOR'S QUESTIONS, TOGO SAID HE FELT KOREANS WERE NOT PURSUING A NEGOTIATING COURSE, WITH LINES OPEN FOR CONTINUING DISCUSSION, BUT THEY WERE PERILOUSLY CLOSE TO HAVING LEVIED AN ULTIMATUM. HE JUDGED FONMIN KIM DON-JO'S QTE MOOD UNQTE AS ASSUMING GOJ WOULD ULTIMATELY GIVE IN TO ALL DEMANDS. HE GLOOMILY CONCLUDED, HOWEVER, THAT HE COULD SEE LITTLE ELSE THAT THE GOJ COULD DO IN RESPONSE TO ROK PRESSURE. HE WHOLEHEARTEDLY AGREED THAT LINES OF TALK MUST BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL

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OPEN AND RUPTURE AVOIDED AT ALL COSTS. FAILURE WOULD BENEFIT NEITHER SIDE. HE ESTIMATED THAT CLIMAX OF PRESENT STAGE OF CRISIS WOULD PROBABLY OCCUR IN NEXT DAY OR SO, SINCE KOREANS SEEM TO CONSIDER PRIMIN TANAKA'S DEPARTURE OVERSEAS SEPT 12 TO BE A KIND OF DEADLINE.

7. AMBASSADOR HODGSON REVIEWED AGAIN OUR CONCERN, OUR EFFORT TO PLAY A USEFUL ROLE WITH BOTH SIDES WITHOUT BECOMING INVOLVED IN DIRECT ACTIONS. HE EMPHASIZED THE NEED TO MOVE AWAY FROM EMOTIONAL LEVEL AND, ABOVE ALL AT THIS POINT, KEEP THE LINES OPEN BETWEEN TWO SIDES. TOGO EXPRESSED GRATITUDE OF HIS GOVERNMENT FOR U.S. ROLE, INCLUDING FREQUENT CONTACTS HERE, IN WASHINGTON AND SEOUL. HE SAID THEY HAD NOT DECIDED WHETHER THE TIME

HAD COME TO ASK USG TO PRESENT ITS VIEWS TO ROKG.

8. LOCAL PRESS HAS REPORTED DECISION TO SEND FORMER
FONMIN SHIINA AS SPECIAL ENVOY TO SEOUL. MINISTER ROK
EMBASSY CALLED ON POLCOUNS LATE SEPT 10 FOR EXCHANGE OF
VIEWS, INCLUDING REQUEST WE BRING INFLUENCE TO BEAR ON
GOJ, BUT HE DID NOT APPEAR TO BE CURRENT ON STATUS OF
ACTION. WE URGED HIM TO REPORT STRAIGHT VIEW, WHICH
HE SAID EMBASSY HELD, OF LIMITATIONS ON POSSIBILITY OF
GOJ ACTION, WE TOLD HIM WE HAVE STRONG IMPRESSION GOJ
HAS BEEN PRESSED ABOUT AS FAR AS IT CAN REALISTICALLY GO.
HODGSON

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